

# AMAZONIA AÇU

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## FOREWORD

Americas Society is pleased to present *Amazonia Açu*, an exhibition that aims to highlight the diversity of the Amazonia region. While curators hailing from each of the nine countries of the territory—Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela—were invited to cocurate the exhibition, we acknowledge and problematize the decision to use the nation-state as an organizational method for this project. As such, the curators have endeavored to provide a pluralistic perspective on the region that rejects the flattening colonial gaze and instead places emphasis on the richness and variety of experiences, aesthetics, and materialities captured by the featured artists. Keyna Eleison served as curatorial advisor and the exhibition was cocurated by Grace Aneiza Ali, Christian Bendayán, Elvira Espejo Ayca, Diana Iturralde,

Miguel Keerveld, NouN and Tzi, Mateus Nunes, Luis Romero, and María Wills. Thirty-four artists and collectives have contributed over fifty works completed in a wide range of mediums, including video, weaving, and ceramics, to name a few.

I am grateful to all the artists, Keyna Eleison, Grace Aneiza Ali, Christian Bendayán, Elvira Espejo Ayca, Diana Iturralde, Miguel Keerveld, NouN and Tzi, Mateus Nunes, Luis Romero, and María Wills for organizing this exhibition and for working with our team to bring it to our gallery. I also express my thanks to the Art at Americas Society curatorial team: to Director and Chief Curator Aimé Iglesias Lukin for her leadership; to Assistant Curators Sarah Lopez, Carla Lucini, and Tatiana Marcel, who worked together on the presentation of this exhibition; to Karen Marta for her editorial support of Americas Society's publications; to Todd Bradway for his project management; and to Garrick Gott for designing this series.

The presentation of *Amazonia Açu* is made possible by generous support from the William Talbott Hillman Foundation, the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, the Consulate General of Brazil in New York with Instituto Guimarães Rosa, the Cowles Charitable Trust, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature. In-kind support is provided by Instituto de Visión.

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SUSAN SEGAL  
PRESIDENT AND CEO, AS/COA



# AMAZONIA BEYOND BORDERS

*Aimé Iglesias Lukin*





Much of the imagination surrounding the South American region called Amazonia characterizes it as a natural reservoir that is not “contaminated” by culture. These stereotyping views are born from the Western divide between nature and culture, as well as human and nonhuman, and are rooted in the colonialist enterprise behind the so-called discovery of the Americas.

Even the history of how the region was named is marked by the fantasy of an empty land and an extractivist ethos: the name comes from the narratives of Spanish explorer Francisco de Orellana, who in 1541 carried out an expedition in search of El Dorado. Leaving from the Andes, he found a very large and extensive river that lead him to the Atlantic, and he described to the king of Spain how he had encountered matriarchal societies where “land was subject to women, who lived in the same way as Amazons, and were very rich, possessing much gold and silver.”<sup>1</sup>

The “Amazonia *açu*”—the latter a Tupi–Guaraní term for “large” or “expanded”—is

not only the largest carbon sink on Earth and a sanctuary of biodiversity, but also home to hundreds of languages and other forms of cultural expression. In the early conversations about planning an exhibition focused on art of Amazonia, I remarked to Susan Segal, the president and CEO of Americas Society, how important it was to show this diversity and to find a curator that would know firsthand about all these cultures. She brilliantly referred to President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's role organizing the 2023 Amazon Summit to coordinate efforts for the protection of the region, which inspired us to adopt a cooperative or diplomatic model in conceiving this show.<sup>2</sup>

That is why we invited curators from each of the nine countries of the region to curate this show together. Departing from traditional models that conceive of the curator as author, Americas Society coordinated a series of convenings in which each curator presented on the creators of the countries they represented. Of course, collective work is not easy. Led by

curatorial advisor Keyna Eleison, who is the founding curator of the Amazon Biennial in Belém and has done extensive work on the region, the group discussed common political and environmental concerns that have historically affected artists of Amazonia, while also identifying the differences and specificities of their experiences and artistic cosmologies. Challenging the Western differentiations between art and craft, the resulting selection includes a wide range of materials, techniques, and themes. In doing so, the exhibition aims to highlight the diversity of the region, encouraging future research and other exhibitions or projects to expand study of the territory. A symposium to be held in February will present the yearslong work of the Getty Foundation's The Amazon Basin as Connecting Borderland initiative, furthering these discussions in the academic sphere.<sup>3</sup> But our exhibition also hopes to spark discussions in the mainstream media and among a general audience that will foster more interest in the region, demonstrating its

diversity and promoting the creators that call it home.

We are aware of the contradictions inherent in trying to show the richness of Amazonia's ancestral Indigenous creators by referring to nation-states and a curatorial model drawn from diplomatic collaboration to organize the research and planning of the exhibition. But this is a contradiction that we hope to face head-on and take responsibility for. Housed in a policy center like Americas Society, our art and exhibitions program is ideally situated to think through such contradictions and the role of cultural diplomacy in enhancing or shaping art historical discourse.

Meanwhile, we can focus on the humble but important goal of presenting our audiences with objects that tell stories they did not know about, and that can help expand all of our minds.

- 1 “Having left this province of St. John, and the piraguas having desisted from following them, they determined to rest in a forest. Captain Orellana, by means of a vocabulary which he had made, asked many questions of a captured Indian, from whom he learned that that land was subject to women, who lived in the same way as Amazons, and were very rich, possessing much gold and silver. They had five houses of the sun plated with gold, their own houses were of stone, and their cities defended by walls; and he related other details, which I can neither believe nor affirm, owing to the difficulty in discovering the truth.” Antonio de Herrera, “The Voyage of Francisco de Orellana,” in *Expeditions into the Valley of the Amazons 1539, 1540, 1639*, trans. and ed. Clements R. Markham (Hakluyt Society, 1859), 36. Cited in Aimé Iglesias Lukin, Karen Marta, Tie Jojima, and Edward J. Sullivan, eds., *El Dorado: A Reader* (Americas Society, 2024), 170.
- 2 Manuela Andreoni and Max Bearak, “Amazon Countries, Led by Brazil, Sign a Rainforest Pact,” *New York Times*, August 8, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/08/climate/amazon-rainforest-belem-protections.html>.
- 3 “Connecting Art Histories,” Getty, accessed June 3, 2025. <https://www.getty.edu/projects/connecting-art-histories>.



# THE NINE-FACETED PRISM

Keyna Eleison





A prism is more than an object that refracts light. It is a symbol of multiplicity and transformation, of how one sole beam can unfold into infinite colors. It's not just an optical phenomenon—it is itself an image of the world. On the inside of a prism, light faces resistance, deviates, breaks itself apart, and takes on colors. One ray of sunshine expands into specters, revealing that the invisible has always been present. In this exhibition, we take the prism as a metaphor for the vastness and complexity of Amazonia, a territory that, like light, never materializes the same way. It changes, dances, spreads itself out.

With its nine faces, this symbolic prism mirrors the work of the curators hailing from the nine territories of Amazonia, each one bringing not only the baggage pertaining to their region, but also the essence of an Amazonia that reveals itself to be both plural and unique. These are living, thinking facets of a whole that together embrace and redirect the energy of local histories. The curatorship in question is not a neutral gesture of mediation; it is an act of presence. It

means taking a stand, listening, recognizing, and proposing.

Amazonia isn't one Amazonia, but several. It is made up of rivers that flow in opposite directions, trees that rise from ancestral histories, peoples that carry ancestral memories and day-to-day struggles. It is a constellation of territories, cultures, languages, and cosmologies, the interlacing of which is determined by resistances that unfurl in the face of contemporary challenges. When we look at Amazonia, we must see it as a living organism, a collective body in motion, and not as the frozen image of an untouched forest. This prism stands as an invitation to unravel colonial myths and clear spaces for different epistemologies.

Each curator in this exhibition is one face of the prism, radiating their unique and indispensable perspective to help take account of Amazonia's immensity. Their voices, all rooted in different experiences—Indigenous, river-dwelling, urban, Afro-Amazonian, *quilombolas*, *caboclas*—do not compete with one

another. They coexist, blur into one another, create friction against one another, hear one another out. Alongside the artworks that make up the exhibition stand the voices that guide us, whether as narrators, witnesses, or instigators of new questions.

The curators, all from different Amazonian territories, are more than art mediators; they are guardians of their cultures, histories, and worldviews. They invite us to look beyond stereotypes of the Amazon, listen to its deeper tones, connect ourselves with its subtler layers. Each curator carries with themselves an approach to the territory, translating their experiences into a curatorial practice that reflects the specifics of their region and thus contributing to a dialogue with the whole. Their artistic choices are not random; they answer to particular flows, technologies, poetics, intellects—to what is urgent today.

Very much like Amazonia, the exhibition is not self-contained. It is a space of openness, interconnection, and meeting. Each work

selected, each narrative constructed, carries within itself a story that adds to other stories, creating a collective quilt. As they receive light, prisms not only divide it into colors, they also project it away from themselves, illuminating new horizons. Such is this exhibition's proposal: to not only contemplate the Amazon, but to live it, feel it, mirror and project it as a force for transformation that far exceeds its geographical limits.

Amazonia doesn't fit on the map. It expands past political coordinates. It pulsates in languages that resist oblivion, in rituals that reenact entire worlds, in arts that endure through the ages. In this exhibition, the curatorial gesture commits itself to listening. Listening to what the forests are whispering as they turn silent. Listening to what the bodies tell us.

In this way, the curators present as body-territories. Each curator, in gathering artists, artworks, and ideas, projects not only the tales of their land, but also the desires of their intellect. Their curatorial practices refuse to

separate between politics and aesthetics. Here, art is a way of thinking about the world. It is both gesture and narrative. It is also enchantment, for enchantment is a form of knowledge. The selections made by these nine gazes refuse colonial images of Amazonia. There is no place here for exoticization or oversimplification. There is presence, complexity, and texture.

Every walk through the space of the exhibition becomes a journey, a dive into territories that extend from the banks of great rivers to the depths of forests, from ancestral knowledge to complex practices that reconfigure the ways in which we think about contemporary Amazonia. Here, visitors are invited not only to engage with their eyes, but also their bodies, minds, and hearts. The narratives unfold in different formats, creating an immersive experience that challenges the limits of what we view as art.

Visitors are also invited to decelerate. Amazonian time is not the time of the clock. It is ebb-and-flow time. The exhibition advances this different register of time, one that allows

us to dive deep, not just rush past. Time enough for viewers to let themselves be affected, interrupted, transformed.

At the core of it all we find dialogue: between artworks and visitors, between Amazonian territories, between time and space. Amazonia, as viewed by the contributing curators, emerges as a site of resistance and renovation, memory and reinvention. It reminds us that art is, above all, a political act, a gesture of preservation and transformation, a tool for imagining a possible world.

That is why we speak here of “Amazonia *açu*”—big Amazonia, vast, insurmountable in its entirety. “Açu,” from the Tupi–Guaraní as well as many other languages, carries within itself not only the idea of dimension, but also presence, intensity, force brimming over its own contours. Amazonia *açu* isn’t merely a geographical description; it is a summons to see with ample eyes, to feel with one’s whole body, to acknowledge that this territory is made of vital excesses, fertile multiplicities, memories

that do not fit into any single narrative. It is an Amazonia that will not be contained by frontiers or oversimplifications, and that demands we listen to it in a way that is likewise “*açu*”: attentive, profound, enlarged. A kind of listening that reminds us that greatness isn’t about domination, but embracing diversity.

To speak of Amazonia *açu* also means to break with the idea that Amazonia is something isolated. It is, by nature, transboundary, as it precedes all official maps and treatises. The Amazon basin spreads out across nine countries, forming a body that breathes in unison, a network of rivers, forests, and peoples whose dialogue transcends the imaginary lines traced by colonialism. Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, and Brazil—each carry a part of this greatness. Each hold a unique reflection of this living prism.

In places where the forest meets a great mountain range’s buttresses, ways of living sustain themselves somewhere between autonomy and displacement. There, in rural zones

and expanding urban centers, contemporary expression coexists with ancestral practice. Popular festivals, roadside commerce, community radio, and art/politics workshops evidence an Amazonia that is made up of both invention and the everyday, where the struggle for territory is also an affirmation of unique ways to inhabit the world.

Further ahead, in areas accessible through slow, mighty rivers, riverside and urban communities organize around water and forest, reinventing their modes of production, creation, and education. Art emerges from hammocks, kitchens, docks, and makeshift schools. Unlikely cities take shape in fragments that combine traditional techniques with bold visual language, creating multiple poetics in dialogue with both isolation and expanding digital connectivity.

In yet another territory, shot through with conflicts over the exploitation of natural resources, art manifests itself as a critical and aesthetic intervention. Graffiti artists, performers, filmmakers, and visual educators



negotiate between urban peripheries and forest communities, building creative networks that destabilize dominant narratives. Here, landscape isn't just nature; it is also industry and tension, a stage for multiple sociopolitical dialogues.

There is also a zone marked by the presence of harbors and river markets, where Amazonia shows itself to be in constant motion. Cities grow by the riverbanks, between stilt houses and businesses, with their alternative cultural centers, their dance groups, their communications networks. Art here is noise and flow, the overlapping of sounds, smells, images, and voices coursing through one another. It is in this movement that an aesthetics of transit, improvisation, and urgency is sketched out.

In another territory the sky takes center stage. As the forest thins out, the horizon opens up. The landscape, less dense, unveils an Amazonia of open fields, savannahs and *cerrados*, where arts collectives act as bridges between ways of life. Artistic practices range from radio to

theatre, masonry to audiovisual mediums, the act of teaching to the act of creating. Resistance is organized around the gesture of making the invisible visible—what the city doesn't see, what goes unmarked on the map.

There is an urban Amazonia too, where historic centers are home to universities, *ateliers*, and artistic occupations. There, cultural production stands beside disputes around habitation, mobility, and memory. Streets turn into improvised galleries and walls become urban manifestoes. Art feeds off collective life: off Carnival blocks, autonomous festivals, communal kitchens, and the various creations that spread throughout the city, forming tracks of resistance and imagination.

Elsewhere in the territory, where different biomes meet, Amazonia becomes plural. Art springs from the contact of cultures: migrants, old-timers, digitally connected young people. These are areas of friction, where electronic music speaks to ritual drumming, where fashion design is in dialogue with the wisdom of the grandmothers, where sound recording studios

share the same block as community vegetable gardens. Here, technologies do not stand in opposition to the forest—they listen to it, translate it, reverberate it.

There is also a part of the territory where water presides over everything, from economic exchanges to interpersonal relationships. It is the floating Amazonia, made of houseboats, navigation schools, improvised antennae, fragile and potent connections. Here, art is made in the crossing: from one margin to the other, from yesterday to tomorrow, from what is remembered to what is still dreamed of.

And lastly, at a juncture where African heritages mix with those of *caboclos* and Indigenous peoples, Amazonia takes on a radically hybrid and cosmopolitan face. Beauty salons function as cultural centers, night dances create social choreographies, and homemade studios turn out soundtracks for possible worlds. The aesthetics of survival turn into creative power and politics is made in rhyme, clothing, and videos shared by networks of urgency and affect.

This multiple, interdependent Amazonia composes a life-system that challenges any centralized national politics. It teaches us that we can only look after the planet by looking after what is simultaneously vast and full of detail. A leaf that falls in Ecuador nourishes a river in Brazil. Destruction in one place reverberates throughout all of them. Amazonia *açu* is, therefore, more than a territory—it is a common destination.

To bear this in mind broadens the very purpose of the exhibition. What seemed at first like multiple curatorships reveals itself to be a sentient diplomatic platform where art serves as a bridge between countries, a common language, a space of affective translation between different worlds. Each artist featured here carries in their work not only an aesthetic, but an ethics as regards life: an urgent demand, a radical hope.

The prism, as it expands outwards and embraces this transnational Amazonia *açu*, becomes a constellation. And what was once an optical image morphs instead into a cosmological image.

Each curator becomes a star with its own radiance, but connected to a broader mesh. And the exhibition affirms itself as a collective sky where visitors may orient themselves, lose themselves, and find themselves once again.

Art, in this exhibition, is no ornament. It is worldmaking technology. Through it we are able to glimpse the possible intertwinements of memory and future. In every artistic gesture there pulsates a wisdom that spans generations.

Facing this veritable universe, the visitor is invited to go on a crossing. No passivity is possible in the face of Amazonia *açu*. It beckons us to hear with our whole bodies, to rethink the ways in which we inhabit the world, to decolonize the senses. Each step through this exhibition is an opportunity to unravel certainties, to open up inner clearings, to acknowledge the fact that art *can* be a sort of forest. A forest one cannot traverse without being transformed.

In the intermeshing of Amazonia's nine territories, curatorship becomes collective composition. A chorus of languages and affects,

a silent conversation between pieces that acknowledge one another. What is built here is a new space-time: a living Amazonia, one that is told from the inside. It is an Amazonia that will not be explained away and that, precisely for this reason, becomes even more luminous, urgent, political.

In this curatorial constellation, time is circular, made of rain and memory cycles. Space is porous, made of meeting and ebbing waters. And the gaze is multiple, made of reflections. The nine-faceted prism teaches us that every attempt at synthesis is violent, and that there is more power in multiplying than in reducing. This is an exhibition that does not exhaust the question. Quite the contrary; it opens up possibilities.

Amazonia, when refracted through this prism, ceases to be a setting and affirms itself as a subject. An active, ancestral, collective, insurgent subject. A subject who dances with the waters and sings with time. A subject who demands to be heard, but who also offers shelter. A subject who both embraces and confronts. A

subject who, with its every gesture, reminds us that looking after Amazonia ultimately means looking after ourselves—not as a matter of altruism, but interdependence.

In this exhibition, Amazonia isn't merely a theme. It is master and method. It is language and world. It is roots burrowing deep and treetops expanding. It is a body that bleeds and flowers. It is, at one and the same time, memory and possibility. Presenting itself through nine gazes, Amazonia is revealed in countless more. And Amazonia invites us to keep on looking, even when looking no longer suffices and all that is left is the gesture.

Let this gesture be one of care, then. Of listening. Of courage to imagine, alongside the artists, curators, and peoples featured here, a future that does not replicate the violence of the past. A future where art not only represents the world, but actively takes part in its reinvention. A future where the prism may go on refracting new colors, and where Amazonia *açu* may remain indomitable, brilliant, collective—and alive.





# WORKS

# DANASION AKOBE

Danasion Akobe (b. 1971, Akisiamauw, Suriname) is an expert in a Maroon practice of wood carving known as Tembe Art. Trained in these traditional techniques, his work includes traces of several Maroon groups. Akobe has contributed to various projects of internationally renowned artists, including designs by Dutch Design that were presented in the 2010 exhibition *Sure Suriname* in The Hague, the Netherlands. Inspired by the knowledge of his grandmother, he builds on the techniques of Tembe Art that he was taught.

Akobe's painted wood panel is adorned with curving, intertwined lines, traditionally created to connect the past, present, and future through the process called *paw a paw den doe*—"line-on-line with content" in the Maroon Saramaccan language. The artist refers to his personal detailing patterns as "*Malohkoh* Lining." The practice is named after his foremother Ma Lohkoh, who was captured in western Ghana and enslaved on a plantation in Suriname, which she fled with her two sisters, thus preserving their African heritage. In the *Amazonia Açú* exhibition, Akobe shows a dialogue between Saramaccan and Aucanisi Maroon traditions. Not only does he play with culture's ability to adapt, but through his praxis he also celebrates collectivity. While Akobe intertwines contemporary and traditional art, he entangles labor, knowledge, materiality, and technology with cultural complexities. (MIGUEL KEERVELD)



*Malohkoh Panel*, 2024. Acrylic on carved wood,  $59\frac{1}{8} \times 28\frac{3}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{4}$  inches ( $150 \times 73 \times 3$  cm). Courtesy of Readytex Art Gallery

# ANGÉLICA ALOMOTO

Angélica Alomoto (b. 1978, Quito, Ecuador), a Kichwa-descended artist from Napo, Ecuador, works between the Amazon, where her family and cultural roots lie, and the Andes, where she currently resides. Her background in fine arts and visual anthropology allows her to ground her practice in conceptual rigor, ritualistic practices, and historical research. Alomoto has returned to the archival illustration that is the basis of the installation *Cuatro caminos* (Four paths) (2024) in more than four works, unraveling a thread of colonial legacy that embraces intergenerational trauma, storytelling as emancipation, the impact of urbanization on community memory, extractive economies, and the fractured yet enduring multispecies relationships of the Amazon. “I first saw this image when I was about eight, in a history book,” she recalls. “Since then, I’ve been searching for that place in the forest—returning to the image to understand why it remains so deeply rooted in me.”

In *Cuatro caminos*, Alomoto reworks the image through the material and symbolic use of rubber sap, stripping away its association with colonial violence to evoke the spirit of the forest. The trees, rendered as presences rather than objects, are framed by Omagua ancestral drawings above and below, symbolizing the spirit of forest. “Together,” she states, “they embrace the trees that continue to suffer during extraction.” In front of the canvas stands a *mokawa*, a ceramic vessel used in both everyday life and ritual, painted with the same motifs: illustrated forest on the inside, spirit of the forest on the outside. As Alomoto states, “this *mokawa* holds water that, over time, will evaporate, becoming as intangible as the spirits of the desecrated forests.” (DIANA ITURRALDE)



*Cuatro caminos* (Four paths), 2024. Acrylic and rubber sap on canvas, colored ceramic and water, painting:  $118\frac{1}{8} \times 59\frac{1}{8}$  inches ( $300 \times 150$  cm), mokawa:  $7\frac{1}{8} \times 7\frac{1}{8} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$  inches ( $18 \times 18 \times 9$  cm).  
Courtesy of the artist

# PABLO AMARINGO

Pablo Amaringo (b. 1938, Puerto Libertad, Peru; d. 2009, Pucallpa, Peru) was born into a renowned family of shamans near Tamanco, a village on the banks of the Ucayali River. From a young age, he had experiences with ayahuasca and he became a healer and herb doctor at the age of twenty-seven, practicing for several years in Peru and Brazil. Under the guidance of herbal masters, he deepened his knowledge of the Amazonian worldview but, in 1977, decided to abandon shamanism to fully devote himself to his other great passion: art.

Self-taught, he is considered the father of neo-Amazonian realism and visionary art, styles that detail the Amazonian universe. The former focuses on the ecosystem of jungles and rivers, the latter on the dreamlike settings and characters of a specific ayahuasca mythology. In *El baile de los Puca-bufeos* (Puca-bufeos' dance) (2009), aquatic creatures such as fish, mermaids, and pink dolphins appear alongside other Amazonian animals covered in psychedelic ornaments deriving from the complex visions induced by entheogenic plants. In 1988, Amaringo founded the Usko Ayar art school in Pucallpa, Peru, where he taught his style to dozens of young Mestizo and Indigenous people.

(CHRISTIAN BENDAYÁN)



*El baile de los Puca-bufeos* (Puca-bufeos' dance), 2009. Oil on canvas, 44½ × 34¾ inches (113 × 88.5 cm). Hochschild Correa Collection

# JOHAN AMIEMBA

Johan Amiembra (b. 1976, Brokopondo, Suriname) lives and works in Cayenne, French Guiana. A member of the Saamaka community descended from Africans who escaped slavery, he carries on his community's traditions as a sculptor, practicing the traditional craftsmanship of the Bushinengue, or Surinamese Maroon, culture. Trained in wood carving by his father, Amiembra draws inspiration from the motifs of Tembe Art to bring to life his creations, which are primarily made of lemongrass wood, known as *bwa sitronèl* in Creole or *bois citronnelle* in French. Numerous artifacts in a Tembe Art style have been made since the nineteenth century, including many everyday objects such as benches, combs, plates, calabash dippers, and paddles.

Amiembra specializes in making combs, a choice that allows him to explore the theme of love—such objects have powerful romantic symbolism in his community. Each piece he creates is unique, as for him wood is the bearer of emotions, with each work demanding a new interpretation. Among his creations *Peigne* (Comb) (2024) stands out as an ornamental object intended to be given to a loved one. The lines and shapes carved into the wood reflect ancestral knowledge, holding within them the secrets of the bonds that unite two people. For Amiembra, each curve and pattern evokes love or friendship, as suggested by his interactions with the people who commission his work. (NouN and T2i)





*Peigne (Comb)*, 2024. Lemongrass wood, 2 × 11 inches (5 × 28 cm).  
Courtesy of the artist

# LOLA ANKARAPI

Lola Ankarapi (b. 1967, Tepu, Suriname) is an artist working in dialogue with her Indigenous roots in the Wayana and Trio cultures. Since the age of eleven, she has created artworks that are significant within the traditions of her communities. This artistic labor includes body painting for ceremonial celebrations and mourning events—using pigments derived from a fruit called *menoe*—and decorating objects that have spiritual meaning. An important part of Ankarapi's practice is supporting and training community members, a task that includes her children, creating space to share Wayana culture with the world.

Ankarapi is well known for making the decorated wooden disks called *maluanas*. She has created one that measures one meter in diameter for the *Amazonia Açu* exhibition. While they include many colorful geometric patterns and animal depictions, *maluanas* also narrate the history of Wayana people throughout the Amazon. Used to decorate communal spaces, they are placed in the peak of roofs in circular village huts. These hand-painted discs engage in dialogues with the imaginaries of Wayana culture, including beings such as water spirits (*mulokot*) and double-headed caterpillars (*kuluwayak* and *totokosi*). Her labor speaks to and includes these other-than-human entities, giving them life by acknowledging their value to the collective.

(MIGUEL KEERVELD)



*Maluana*, 2025. Acrylic on carved wood,  $15\frac{3}{4} \times 15\frac{3}{4} \times 1$  inches  
( $40 \times 40 \times 2.5$  cm). Courtesy of Readytex Art Gallery

## CHONON BENSHO

Chonon Bensho (b. 1992, Yarinacocha, Peru) is the first Indigenous Amazonian woman to graduate from art school in Peru. Her research and production reclaim and renew the pictorial language of her people's textiles. Born in 1992 in the Shipibo-Konibo community of Santa Clara de Yarinacocha, she won the XII National Painting Competition of the Central Reserve Bank of Peru (BCRP) at age twenty-eight with a textile work. Today, she is one of the most internationally recognized contemporary Amazonian artists. Her work captures myths and customs in a figurative style that meshes with *kené*—traditional Shipibo designs, the embroidered version of which is known as *kewé*. In her work *Maya kené* (Circular design) (2021), the embroidery advances in a circular motion—as in songs of healing—taking its shape from the winding courses of Amazonia's rivers, the main means of communication and transport between villages that depend on these waterways for their survival. (CHRISTIAN BENDAYÁN)



*Maya kené* (Circular design), 2021. Embroidery on fabric, 47¼ × 31½ inches (120 × 80 cm). Hochschild Correa Collection

## DARRELL A. CARPENAY

Darrell A. Carpenay (b. 1984, Georgetown, Guyana) is a photographer whose work demonstrates a sustained investment in documenting the landscapes, cultures, and contested futures of Guyana's Amazon region. In *The Lost World, Mount Roraima* series (2019) he chronicles a rare expedition to the Guyanese base of Mount Roraima—an area so remote that few Guyanese, apart from Indigenous guides, have ever reached it. Located at the tri-border of Brazil, Guyana, and Venezuela, Mount Roraima marks not only a geopolitical intersection but also a vital juncture in the territorial imagination of Amerindian peoples. For generations, it has functioned as a connective landscape that links communities across national boundaries through shared cosmologies, trade routes, kinship ties, and spiritual geographies.

Carpenay's photographs unsettle modern cartographic certainties, revealing that for many of Guyana's Indigenous communities, the Amazon is not a bounded territory but a lived geography. Guided by Akawaio-speaking community members from Kako Village, Carpenay's journey reflects a continuum of territorial guardianship. His images trace the arduous trek through highland rainforest, capturing moments of endurance, adaptation, and care. In one photograph, a *warishi*—a traditional Amerindian rucksack woven from *nibbi* plant fibers and reinforced with cane—rests along the trail. Used to carry cassava, fruits, and meat, the *warishi* becomes a vessel of embodied knowledge and ecological intimacy. These photographs offer more than a visual record; they illuminate the intimate, ongoing labor of cultural survival within ecologies increasingly threatened by contested borders. (GRACE ANEIZA ALI)



*Preparing to Move*, from the series *The Lost World*, Mount Roraima, 2019. Digital photograph, 28 x 18 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches (71.1 × 47.5 cm).  
Courtesy of the artist



*Hauling Through Shallows*, from the series *The Lost World*, Mount Roraima, 2019. Digital photograph, 24 × 16 inches (61 × 40.6 cm).  
Courtesy of the artist [left]





*Warishi at Roraima*, from the series *The Lost World, Mount Roraima*, 2019. Digital photograph, 24 × 16 inches (61 × 40.6 cm) [middle]; *Young Guide at Roraima*, from the series *The Lost World, Mount Roraima*, 2019. Digital photograph, 24 × 16 inches (61 × 40.6 cm) [right]; Courtesy of the artist

# ELÍAS CAUREY CAUREY

Elías Caurey Caurey (b. 1977, Charagua, Bolivia) is a prominent Guaraní intellectual. A sociologist, anthropologist, and poet, he uses words as a bridge between culture and nature. In 2019, he represented the Indigenous Peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean at UNESCO. He is the author of over twenty publications on Guaraní language, culture, and spirituality. His most renowned works are: *Yayandu Ñeere* (Feeling the word) (2018), a bilingual poetry collection that was awarded the Eduardo Abaroa Plurinational Prize; *Ñeepoti Kaa Peguarã* (Song to the forest) (2020); and the *Diccionario etimológico y etnográfico de la lengua Guaraní hablada en Bolivia* (An etymological and ethnographic dictionary of the Guaraní language spoken in Bolivia) (1993), part of the Bicentennial Library of Bolivia.

Caurey Caurey tells us of the *algarrobo* or carob, a tree sacred to the Guaraní and a symbol of life and communion. People come together in its shade to debate and share knowledge. The carob provides shelter to birds and people alike, becoming a space for collective reflection. Caurey Caurey's audiovisual poetry rescues this bond and reminds us of the value of mutual care among living beings.

His work is also notable for helping to revitalize the Guaraní language, which he defends through poetry. By using the original language in his artistic creations, Caurey Caurey reaches a wide range of Guaraní communities in Bolivia and Paraguay. (ELVIRA ESPEJO AYCA)



*Ivopei-Algarrobo*, 2020. Video based on the Guaraní poetry of the Bolivian Amazon, 2 min., 59 sec. Courtesy of the artist

## COLECTIVO TAWNA

Colectivo TAWNA (est. 2017, Ecuador) is a film collective dedicated to telling stories from and about the Amazon. In Kichwa, a language spoken widely across the Ecuadorian Amazon, *tawna* is an oar used to steer canoes through the water. As a metaphor, it evokes direction, resistance, and transformation. True to this spirit, the collective brings together filmmakers, visual artists, and storytellers to translate the depth of their oneiric worlds, sociocultural contexts, and relational ontologies into compelling audiovisual narratives. Through their work they imagine and protect a shared future where Amazonian ways of life and coexistence continue to expand and renew themselves.

These photographs are part of *Ñuka Shuti Man* (My name is) (2023), an installation piece comprising photographs, collage, video, and sound, in which TAWNA's cofounder Sani Montahuano and her sisters pay tribute to their mother, Carmelina Ushigua. As a young Sapara woman, Carmelina was forced into marriage and had to leave her beloved home in Old Llachama for the city of Puyo. As Montahuano recalls, "Growing up we had no photographs—only our memory and the stories our mother passed on to us. She created her own forest outside the forest: her own space in the city filled with the animals, plants, and spirits she carried with her." Photography allowed Montahuano and her sisters to retrace the footsteps of their mother and remember both her and her teachings. Montahuano continues, "It helped me understand who I am as a Sapara woman living between the city and the forest. We never forget who we are—or the messages we carry." (DIANA ITURRALDE)



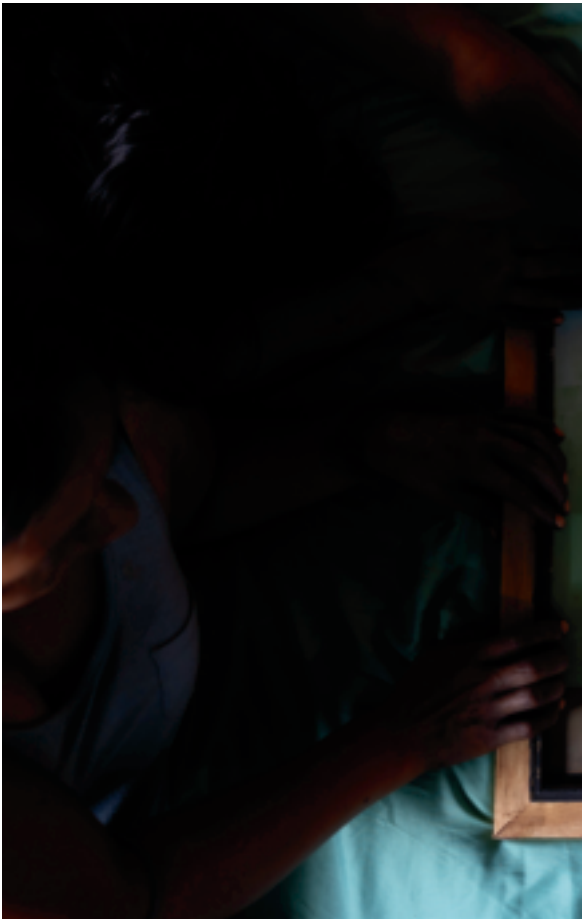
*Ñuka Shuti Man (My name is)*, 2023. Digital photograph,  
12 × 12 inches (30.5 × 30.5 cm). Courtesy of the collective



*Ñuka Shuti Man* (My name is), 2023. Digital photograph,  
8 × 12 inches (20.3 × 30.5 cm). Courtesy of the collective



*Ñuka Shuti Man (My name is)*, 2023. Digital photograph,  
12 × 8 inches (30.5 × 20.3 cm). Courtesy of the collective







*Ñuka Shuti Man (My name is)*, 2023. Digital photograph,  
8 × 12 inches (20.3 × 30.5 cm). Courtesy of the collective

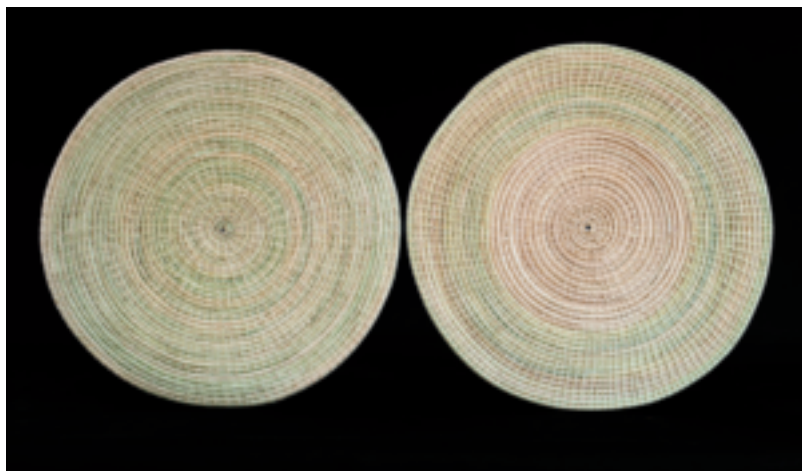
# COMUNIDAD WEENHAYEK

Comunidad Weenhayek (est. the Amazon, Bolivia) is an age-old community specializing in basketry, an ancestral art fundamental to everyday life. Historically, their woven baskets were used to transport such produce as cassava, corn, and fruit. Today, the tradition has evolved, and basketry has become an artistic practice. One of the innovations the community has adopted is the creation of woven structures to scare away birds—true artistic installations that interact with the natural landscape around them.

The community workshop served as a kind of church that taught the art of basket weaving. This practice, centered around the carob tree and making use of natural materials representative of the Weenhayek culture, was highly valued. Woven items were used to fan the flames of fires, for example, and were an essential part of daily life. People even used to travel with their baskets.

Although it was eroded with the arrival of modernization, today the tradition of basket weaving is being revived as an art form thanks to the efforts of Comunidad Weenhayek. Weaving with palm fibers has regained its meaning: no longer merely functional, but now also symbolic. That said, their utility remains—today, baskets are made to scare birds, for example, or hold hot cooking pots.

Such innovation not only holds aesthetic value but also allows us to recall practices from the past and infuse them with fresh meaning in the present. Everything being produced is based on an organic system and does not pollute the way plastic does, but is instead anchored in a natural process unique to the region. Through their artistic innovations the work of Comunidad Weenhayek offers society a way forward: an environment free of pollution. (ELVIRA ESPEJO AYCA)



*Tata peyuka—soplador de fuego* (Fire blower), 2025. Palm plant fiber woven with the basketry technique of the Bolivian Amazon, each:  $9\frac{3}{4} \times 9\frac{3}{4}$  inches (25 × 25 cm). Courtesy of the artists







## ESTELA DAGUA AND NANCY SANTI

Estela Dagua (b. 1951, Puyo, Ecuador) and Nancy Santi (b. 1973, Kawsak Sacha, Ecuador) are two of the Kichwa nation's most renowned potters. For generations, *Runa warmi*—Kichwa women of the Ecuadorian Amazon—have made pottery for daily and ritual use. This matrilineal practice, called *awana* (or “weaving clay”) in Runashimi, reflects the same care and intricacy as textile-making and draws on ancestral knowledge. The clay, mineral pigments, and resin are sourced from the surrounding rivers and forest. These four pieces represent *supai*—forest spirits—and are commonly used in ritual.

Dagua's effigies reference other Kichwa stories and might have been created to be used in a festival. In this context, women make representations of *supai*, as well as contemporary subjects, to remind everyone of their shared ancestral roots in an ever-changing world. The figures take as central a role in the festivities as their makers.

As Santi recalls of her practice, “My mother told me that all of this knowledge we women have—clay, crops, and medicinal plants—were given to us by Nunguli, the goddess of fertility, and caretaker of the Earth, Allpamama.” According to this Kichwa story, a woman struggling to make crops grow followed fruit peels upstream to a bountiful garden, or *chagra*. There, she met Nunguli, who gave her a powerful baby and told her that as long as she keeps this baby with her, his singing will bring her what they need to sustain their family. Santi's two-piece work *Allpamama* (2025) represents the moment in which Nunguli passes the baby to the woman, along with the inherited ability to nurture. “My mother told me I have been touched by Nunguli. She's always with me, in my dreams and in my path. That's why I care for the land and defend my territory, life-sustaining spaces, and the guardian spirits of the Earth, along with others that make up the Mujeres Amazónicas Defensoras de la Selva collective.” Santi's commission was made in collaboration with Nina Gualinga, who also mediated conversations between Santi and curator Diana Iturralde. (DIANA ITURRALDE)



Estela Dagua, *Effigy (Supai)*, 1992–2004. Ceramic and mineral pigments,  $7\frac{3}{8} \times 5\frac{7}{8} \times 5\frac{3}{8}$  inches (18.7 × 15.1. × 13.8 cm).  
Universidad San Francisco de Quito, anthropology collection,  
bequest of Norman E. Whitten, Jr.



Estela Dagua, *Effigy (Supai)*, 1992–2004. Ceramic and mineral pigments,  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{4}$  inches ( $21.5 \times 21.5 \times 16$  cm). Universidad San Francisco de Quito, anthropology collection, bequest of Norman E. Whitten, Jr.





Nancy Santi, *Allpamama*, 2025. Ceramic and mineral pigments, left:  $9\frac{1}{2} \times 5 \times 5\frac{1}{2}$  inches (24.2  $\times$  12.7  $\times$  14 cm), right:  $8\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$  inches (22.2  $\times$  12.1  $\times$  12.1 cm). Courtesy of the artist

## PV DIAS

PV Dias (b. 1994, Belém, Brazil) is a transdisciplinary artist whose practice investigates the way images and narrative constructions of a territory and its people are formed—and how they might be reworked, blurred, or mended. His work critically engages with canonical art systems and exclusionary historiographical traditions. Dias brings together the Black presence in the Amazon and the cultural practices of Indigenous peoples—such as hammocks used for rest, regional dances, and wooden boats employed to navigate the vast rivers of the Amazon basin—with a digital aesthetic rarely associated with the area. This convergence serves as a critical strategy, allowing the artist to question and reframe entrenched cultural distances, such as the distance that separates Brazil from Africa, two lands divided by a river in the Brazilian Amazon, or the artist's home city, Belém, and Rio de Janeiro.

*Interior de uma casa* (Interior of a house) (2021) is part of the *Rasura* (Erasure) series (2019–2021), through which Dias interrogates sociohistorical structures marked by omission and systemic silencing. By digitally painting in saturated colors over photographs taken in Rio de Janeiro, the city where he currently lives, the artist evokes layered senses of belonging and displacement. These visual gestures reflect both his personal migration from Belém to Rio and broader macropolitical processes, such as the formation of peripheral urban centers and the enduring legacies of the African diaspora in Brazil.

(MATEUS NUNES)

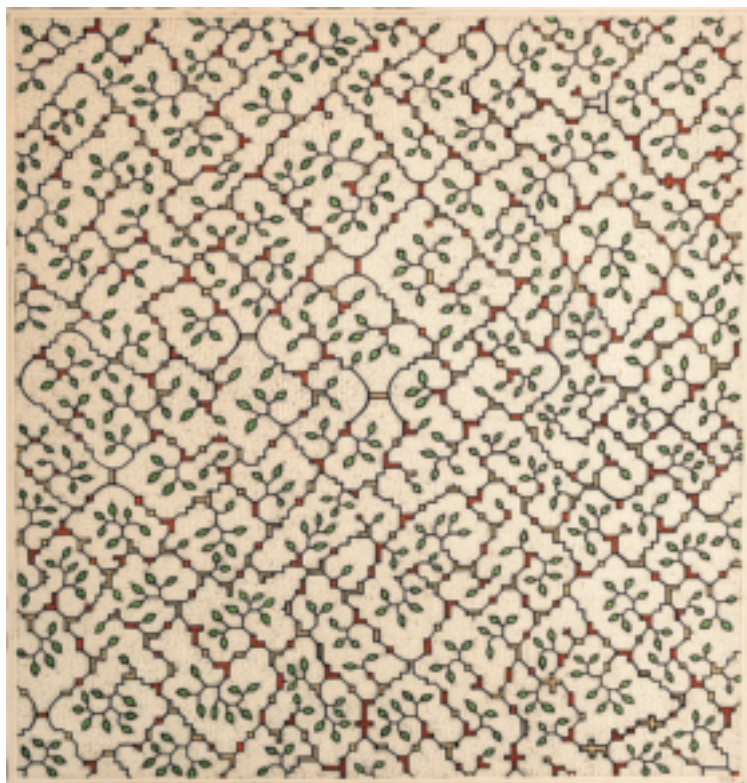


*Interior de uma casa* (Interior of a house), from the series *Rasura* (Erasure), 2021. Digital painting on photograph printed on cotton paper, 27  $\frac{5}{8}$   $\times$  27  $\frac{5}{8}$  inches (70  $\times$  70 cm). Courtesy of the artist

# SARA FLORES

Sara Flores (b. 1950, Tambomayo, Peru) is renowned for the remarkable craftsmanship of her textile work. The geometric perfection of her freehand lines approaches that of digital technology, and the patterns of her designs seem to multiply ad infinitum with flawless precision. Born in the Loreto region of Peru, she was schooled from childhood in the *kené* design tradition of the Shipibo-Konibo people by the women of her family. She is also known for her unique palette, which is limited to the use of colors produced with natural dyes.

Her work *Untitled (Pei Kené 1, 2019)*, 2019 is an iconographic representation of the movement of hydrographic cycles. The design suggests a cartography from which sprout leaves hinting at the forest landscape, an ecosystem of rivers and trees. Like the healing songs intoned in shamanic rites, the vibration produced by the winding paths of Flores's *kené* is enhanced in this piece by the condensed presence of leaves and lianas. (CHRISTIAN BENDAYÁN)



*Untitled (Pei Kené 1, 2019)*, 2019. Natural dyes on wild-cotton canvas, 59  $\frac{1}{8}$   $\times$  55  $\frac{1}{8}$  inches (150  $\times$  140 cm). Courtesy of the Hochschild Correa Collection, the artist and The Shipibo-Conibo Center, NY

# DAWA GARCÍA

Dawa García (b. 1985, Siwütinña community of the Amazon, Venezuela) is a leading figure among the Ye'kwana weavers of the Caura River in Venezuela. She has worked to promote women's basketry within Ye'kwana culture, although it is traditionally a male practice. Her close relationship with her great-grandmother fostered in García a deep understanding of the traditions, practices, and values of her culture, impressing them upon her as an integral part of her people's identity. Her contribution as an artist lies in her innovation of techniques and designs, as well as in the use of natural fibers and dyes. Her baskets are alive with extraordinary beauty and symbolism.

García has been recognized by Spanish newspaper *El País* and the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF) as one of twenty-one Latin Americans changing the world through their commitment to sustainable development and fighting climate change. Her work has been exhibited in the SaloneSatellite, Salone del Mobile (Milan, 2022); *Art Made by Venezuelan Women*, the Swiss Embassy (Caracas, 2022); *El Dorado/From Utopia to Contemporary Myth*, Museo del Amparo (Puebla, 2024), and *Wametisé: ideas para un amazofuturismo*, ARCO (Madrid, 2025). She was awarded second prize in the Creadoras salon, organized by the CAF at the National Art Gallery (Caracas, 2024). (LUIS ROMERO)



*Wiwa (serpiente mistica)* (Wiwa [mystic serpent]), 2023. Mamure fiber and vine,  $8\frac{7}{8} \times 8\frac{7}{8}$  inches (22.5 × 22.5 cm). Courtesy of the artist



*Jojo (patrón de serpiente roja)* (Jojo [red snake pattern]), 2024. Mamure fiber and vine, 12¼ × 6¾ inches (31 × 17 cm). Courtesy of the artist





*Jojo (serpiente guardiana del conuco)* (Jojo [guardian snake of the conuco]), 2024. Mamure fiber and vine, 8¾ × 6¾ inches (22 × 17 cm). Courtesy of the artist

# SHEROANAWE HAKIHIIWE

Sheroanawe Hakihiwe (b. 1971, Sheroana, Venezuela) is an Indigenous contemporary artist based in Mahekototeri, a Yanomami community in Venezuela's Alto Orinoco region. Since the 1990s, he has been developing a body of work focused on preserving the oral memory of his people: their cosmogony, ancestral traditions, territory, and the beings that inhabit it. He has produced handmade paper from native fibers; copublished books with his community, other artists, and independent publishers; created animations; and launched a series of artists' books gathering his culture's traditional wisdom in a visual encyclopedia. His work deploys a concise visual language and ranges extensively across painting, drawing, and, more recently, printmaking. His works are conceived as expressions of knowledge that marry the ancestral with the contemporary.

Hakihiwe has been invited to display his work at the Berlin Biennale (2019), the Venice Biennale (2022), the Kathmandu Triennale (2022), and many other major group exhibitions. His most recent solo show was held in 2025 at the Santiago Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC), and was preceded by a solo exhibition organized by the São Paulo Museum of Art (MASP) in 2023.

Hakihiwe's work features in private and museum collections including the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York; the British Museum, London; the Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art (SMAK), Ghent; the Reina Sofía National Museum Art Centre (MNCARS), Madrid; the Lima Art Museum, Lima; the Latin American Art Museum of Buenos Aires (MALBA), Buenos Aires; the Denver Art Museum (DAM), Denver; and others. (LUIS ROMERO)



*Hekura waha yuamamotima* (Book of house of the spirits), 2023.  
Acrylic on folded cotton paper book,  $9\frac{3}{8} \times 5\frac{7}{8}$  inches ( $24 \times 15$  cm) [top]; *Thootope waha yuamamotima* (Book of vines), 2023. Acrylic on folded cotton paper book,  $9\frac{3}{8} \times 5\frac{7}{8}$  inches ( $24 \times 15$  cm). [bottom];  
Courtesy of the artist and ABRA, Caracas

# SHAUNDELL HORTON

Shaundell Horton (b. 1973, Linden, Guyana) is a visual artist who focuses on sculpture and mixed-media hybrids of collage and painting. During her studies at the Nola Hatterman Art Academy in Paramaribo, the capital of Suriname, she developed her art practice as a conversation between her Guyanese heritage and Suriname's diversity. Following her study, she expanded this focus by investigating the multicultural essence of the Caribbean as well as that of the Amazon.

Horton's work records and archives collective heritage. To strengthen the sentimental and demographic value of her work, she selects her material carefully. *Tenacious* (2022), for example, explores the ecological essence of life, its cycles, and its dialogue with the afterlife. Within her use of materials, Shaundell highlights a nostalgic quality: her sculpture contains items that deal with encounters between the physical and the immaterial, or the memorial value of existence and transcendence. She has woven driftwood, shells, clay, and beads together to create something new through this artwork. The sculpture embodies an artistic labor that expresses the emotions of those species—including humans—who are dealing with prevailing environmental and social issues. (MIGUEL KEERVELD)



*Tenacious*, 2022. Ceramic, driftwood, shells, and clay,  $18\frac{1}{8} \times 15\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$  inches (46 × 40 × 20 cm). Courtesy of Readytex Art Gallery

# SRI IRODIKROMO

Sri Irodikromo (b. 1972, Schiedam, The Netherlands) is a multimedia artist who studied in Suriname and the Netherlands. The daughter of the prominent late visual artist Soeki Irodikromo, Sri finds inspiration in Suriname's diverse society, which she translates into patterns and symbols in her artworks. Her techniques include drawing, painting, sculpting, printing, and weaving; through these practices she creates artworks as testaments to her love for natural materials and multi-culturalism.

*Metamorphosis* (2022) features driftwood combined with a horn made from fired clay. Here, Irodikromo creates a dialogue between two different materials—one worked by humans and the other worked by nature. She wove the clay and driftwood together in a harmonious way, using her materials to transcend mere beauty and instead explore the tension of coexistence between nature and multiple cultures. As a monument to inclusion, this artwork entangles both violence and love as two essential desires in life, whether in the human or the natural world. While Irodikromo aims to capture nature's abilities through her work, she also creates important documents of the cultural diversity of the Amazon. (MIGUEL KEERVELD)



*Metamorphosis*, 2022. Driftwood and clay,  $7\frac{1}{8} \times 11 \times 16\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
( $18 \times 28 \times 42$  cm). Courtesy of Readytex Art Gallery

# CARLOS JACANAMIJOY

Carlos Jacanamijoy (b. 1964, Santiago, Colombia) belongs to the Inga people, an Indigenous community which is part of the broader Quechua cultural grouping. His family lineage—the Jacanamijoy Tisoy clan—is deeply rooted in the Amazonian worldview, where nature, dreams, and spirituality are interwoven in an integral understanding of the world. Jacanamijoy's work embraces both the Andean and the Amazonian, an intersection of cultures that gives rise to sensitive, dreamlike, chromatic narratives around the relationship between the human and natural worlds.

Jacanamijoy's father was the Inga community's knowledge keeper and spiritual guide. He instilled in his son a vital connection with the environment and introduced him to the magic of plants such as *yagé* (ayahuasca). From these early foundations, Jacanamijoy's painting has drawn on rituals, mystical experiences, song, and music. He studied fine art in Bogotá, an encounter with Western perspectives which helped him forge a body of work that is at once authentic and keenly aware of the tensions present in contemporary art.

The work shown here, *De naturaleza interior I* (Of inner nature I) (2018), is a chromatic array of diluted blues and greens, layered with stains and brushstrokes that hint at fragments of plants or flowers—recurring motifs in Jacanamijoy's work. For all its apparent abstraction, his pictorial language is in fact a manifestation of color and matter achieved through trancelike gestural handling. The result is a series of landscapes that are at once spiritual and sensual. Politically engaged, this is an aesthetic that leads us to question the colonial hierarchies of painting and to propose an epistemology of art firmly rooted in the forest. (MARÍA WILLS)





*De naturaleza interior I* (Of inner nature I), 2018. Oil on canvas, 66 $\frac{7}{8}$  × 78 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches (170 × 200 cm). Collection of Lio Malca

# WILFRIDO LUSITANDE PIAGUAJE

Wilfrido Lusitande Piaguaje (b. 1984, San Pablo de Katëtsiaya, Ecuador), the descendent of a renowned family of artists, considers painting and other art practices to be forms of life, resistance, and survival for his people. Visual expression has allowed their spirituality to endure, deeply connected to their ancestral land. “This is the Wa’iya River,” he says of *Desde las raíces Siekopaaí* (From the Siekopaaí roots) (2025). “I had a vision of a canoe that had been long abandoned. A wise man sits beside it while he prepares the canoe for its return to Pë’ëkë’ya. Metaphorically, he is preparing us, the Siekopaaí nation, endowing us with ancestral knowledge for our return.” Next to the wise man is the *yagé* (ayahuasca) vine and the boa, longstanding symbols of spirituality and power.

Pë’ëkë’ya (Lagartococha or Alligator River) is the sacred ancestral territory of the Paaí, or Siekopaaí people, located along the northern border of Ecuador and Peru. Over eighty years ago, the Siekopaaí were displaced and dispossessed by rubber barons, the Ecuador–Peru war over Amazonian land, and evangelical missionaries. For generations, their only return to Pë’ëkë’ya was through dreams and *yagé* visions. In 2023, the Ecuadorian justice system recognized the Siekopaaí’s rightful ownership of Pë’ëkë’ya, marking a historic legal victory.

Despite the current physical and social devastation caused by oil drilling and spills that have claimed the lives of many Paaí elders and wisdom keepers, Lusitande Piaguaje sees the vision that inspired his painting as “a symbol of their return and ongoing effort to reclaim both land and culture.” (DIANA ITURRALDE)



*Desde las raíces Siekopaai* (From the Siekopaai roots), 2025. Acrylic on canvas, 23  $\frac{5}{8}$   $\times$  39  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches (60  $\times$  100 cm). Courtesy of the artist

# THIAGO MARTINS DE MELO

Thiago Martins de Melo (b. 1981, São Luís, Brazil) explores the potency of amalgamated images, symbols, entities, and cultures rendered through the materialities of painting, sculpture, and video—often fusing all three in a single work. His politically charged, anticolonial narratives draw from traditional and syncretic cultural systems, challenging the superficial canons of Western art history and its associated image-making apparatus.

In *Amálgama origem* (Amalgam origin) (2021), a sculpted left hand emerges from a scaled body reminiscent of an anaconda, holding a small green amulet in its palm. The choice of the left hand alludes to the Left-Hand Path (*via sinistra* in Latin), an esoteric Western philosophy practiced by the artist that associates magic with occultism and ceremonial rites. Central to these practices are sexual magic, symbols often misread as satanic, and a radical questioning of religious and moral dogmas. The anaconda suggests an origin principle—as it does in many Amerindian cosmologies—and more broadly evokes the serpent and the concept of the eternal return found in various cultural and ontological frameworks. Nestled in the palm is a small *muraquitã*, a traditional Amazonian amulet believed to bring strength, luck, and protection. Typically carved from green stones like jade or nephrite and shaped as a frog, toad, or turtle, the *muraquitã* originates from Indigenous communities near the Tapajós River. *Amálgama origem* conjures a mystical hybridity of human and nonhuman forms—a recurring motif in Martins de Melo's practice that is also present in *Homem onça* (Jaguar man) (2021), a sculpture in which a jaguar skull merges with the face of a person in a state of ecstasy or agony, proposing a moment of integration or metamorphosis. (MATEUS NUNES)



*Homem onça* (Jaguar man), 2021. Bronze,  $9\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{8} \times 12\frac{5}{8}$  inches (25 × 18 × 32 cm), edition of 3 + 1 AP. Courtesy of the artist, Almeida & Dale, and Lima Galeria



*Amalgama origem* (Amalgam origin), 2021. Bronze,  $28\frac{1}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$  inches ( $72 \times 21 \times 21.5$  cm), edition of 3 + 1 AP. Courtesy of the artist, Almeida & Dale, and Lima Galeria



# HÉLIO MELO

Hélio Melo (b. 1926, Boca do Acre, Brazil; d. 2001, Goiânia, Brazil) worked for many years as a rubber tapper in Acre, a Brazilian state in the western Amazon that borders Peru and Bolivia. This lived experience became the driving force behind his narrative production, both in painting and musical composition. With an explicitly political stance, Melo exposes the state's neglect toward rubber-tapper families and cooperatives—one aspect of a broader program of progressive deforestation and environmental destruction in the Amazon. A self-taught artist, he depicts scenes in which rubber tappers learn directly from nature and Indigenous traditions, often embedding autobiographical elements in his work.

In the drawings presented here—made with leaf extracts prepared by the artist himself and India ink on cardboard—Melo stages various playful scenes. An anthropomorphic cow wearing a dress and holding an umbrella tries to pull a rubber tapper by the leg, while the tapper's wife, clinging to him, pleads for him to stay. In another scene, a rubber tapper attempts to distract a jaguar with his shirt. These works consistently emphasize their environment: elevated wooden stilt houses with thatched roofs, backyard bonfires used to heat and mold raw latex into solid balls for export, and dense forests depicted with intricate geometry and lush canopies. The political dimension of Melo's work is explicit in several pieces, such as the drawing of a rubber tapper who, while incising a tree to extract its sap, rests a rifle against the trunk—both to defend himself from wild animals and to signal his readiness for armed confrontation in a region characterized by rural violence. (MATEUS NUNES)





*A Vaca tirando o seringueiro de casa* (The cow taking the rubber tapper out of his home), 1995. India ink and leaf extract on cardboard, 12  $\frac{5}{8}$   $\times$  15  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches (32  $\times$  39 cm). Courtesy of Almeida & Dale



*Untitled, n.d.*, India ink and leaf extract on cardboard,  $15 \frac{5}{8} \times 13 \frac{7}{8}$  inches (39.5 × 35 cm). Courtesy of Almeida & Dale



*Untitled*, 1990, India ink and leaf extract on cardboard, 11 × 8 ½ inches (28 × 20.5 cm). Private Collection, São Paulo, Brazil

# MARY MORALES BARRIENTOS

Mary Morales Barrientos (b. 1961, Iloseño-Guaraní community of the Amazon, Bolivia) is a renowned weaver and artisan from the Isoso region of Cordillera Province in the department of Santa Cruz, Bolivia. She is recognized for her fundamental role in revitalizing Guaraní textile art. As the founder and departmental president of Artecampo (Fieldart), she has played a key part in consolidating collective spaces for Indigenous craftswomen across the Bolivian Chaco. Her leadership as production manager within her association has been crucial in promoting creativity, improving the living conditions of craftswomen, and radically reappraising ancestral knowledge.

Barrientos employs a warp-faced structure in her weaving, applying two traditional techniques: *moesi* and *q'ara q'ara pepo*. *Moesi* is based on a one-to-one mathematical sequence to create precise, rhythmical compositions; *q'ara q'ara pepo* uses pairs (two-to-two) to create complex figurative motifs.

She uses both techniques to depict symbols like the *toborochi* tree, a reference to the oral narrative of Araverá. In this account, the *toborochi* tree serves as a refuge and protector for Queen Araverá as she flees the hostile spirits known as Añas. Finding shelter in the tree, she gives birth to the territory's legitimate heir.

Through such representations Barrientos weaves mythical and archaeological narratives that keep the Guaraní and Andean-Amazonian worldview alive. (ELVIRA ESPEJO AYCA)



*Memorias del monte* (Memories of the mountain), 2025. Warp-woven with cotton thread using the *moesi* technique with Iloseño-Guaraní figures from the Bolivian Amazon, 78  $\frac{3}{4}$   $\times$  23  $\frac{5}{8}$  inches (200  $\times$  60 cm). Courtesy of the artist







NouN (b. 1987, Paris, France) is a visual artist born in Clichy, a *banlieue* of Paris, who lives and works in French Guiana and Paris. In 2022 she and the artist T2i created *Manman Dilo*, a multidisciplinary exhibition shown in French Guiana, Paris, and several cities in Brazil. The artists' starting point was the place name "Guiana," which according to Indigenous tradition means "Land of abundant water" in the Arawak and Wayana languages. Together they created a collective imaginary and iconography to be presented in a public space that centered on a mythical creature from French Guiana: Manman Dilo, "Mother of Waters" or Mami Wata, half woman and half fish, a figure both feared and admired. With *Manman Dilo* the artists offer a group of works that investigate this figure as a privileged guarantor of history and the ancestral oralities of African descent, as well as a strong feminine power. Today, NouN continues to work on questions of body representation, the decolonized female gaze, and multiple identities.

*Mère des Eaux* (Mother of Waters) (2022) is part of a series of dystopian photographs that addresses the effects of climate change, as rising temperatures and the acidification of oceans and rivers threaten the lives of fish and other underwater organisms. The photograph shows Manman Dilo on the beach with her signature comb and accompanied by jellyfish—that strange animal from the seabed and the depths of time. Here the jellyfish is a symbol of immortality and the sacred feminine.

(NouN and T2i)





*Mère des Eaux* (Mother of Waters), from the series *Manman Dilo*, 2022.  
Digital photograph,  $46\frac{3}{4} \times 33\frac{1}{8}$  inches (118.9 × 84.1 cm). Courtesy  
of the artist

# CLAUDIA OPIMÍ VACA



Claudia Opimí Vaca (b. 1962, Tajibo community of the Amazon, Bolivia) is an artist who takes a contemporary approach to the textile tradition. She is originally from Los Tajibos, a community of Chiquitano immigrants just seventy-five years old.

Her first work was a hand-spun cotton hammock. This marked the start of her association with Artecampo (Fieldart); she received support from the Centro de Investigación, Diseño Artesanal y Comercialización Cooperativa (CIDAC; Center for Research, Artisanal Design, and Cooperative Marketing). Opimí Vaca did not stop at developing creative ideas of her own, but shared her knowledge with more than two hundred and fifty women from ten communities. She thus strengthened the bonds of a collaborative network while preserving the techniques of Chiquitano textile art.

She has adopted the *mola* technique, in which small pieces of fabric are layered and sewn together with fine stitching. Her creative process began with drawing classes, allowing her to develop iconographic compositions which draw on the flora and fauna of her territory. Her creations feature representations of *toboroichi* trees, *patujú* flowers, jaguars, birds, and lowland flora, transforming the woven fabric into a platform for new artistic narratives.

But Opimí Vaca's art does not only keep tradition alive—it reinvents and expands it into new spaces, integrating it into the contemporary art of the community and the Amazon region at large. Her work connects the *mola* technique from the region between Colombia and Panama with the lowlands of Bolivia and especially Santa Cruz. The technique proposes new ways of performing and resignifying traditional textile practices. (ELVIRA ESPEJO AYCA)



*Bajo el toborochi* (Under the *toborochi*), 2025. Cotton fabric embroidered using an appliqué technique from the Tajibo community of the Bolivian Amazon,  $27 \frac{5}{8} \times 82 \frac{3}{4}$  inches ( $70 \times 210$  cm). Courtesy of the artist





# BERNADETTE INDIRA PERSAUD

Bernadette Indira Persaud (b. 1946, Berbice, Guyana) is widely recognized for paintings that confront ecological, social, and political concerns. Through her *Rainforest* series (2009–2014), she treats the Guyanese rainforest—part of the greater Amazonian ecosystem—as a sacred space where cultural memory and natural cycles are bound in continuous transformation. Drawing on her Indo-Caribbean heritage, Persaud bridges Indigenous and Hindu cosmologies and metaphysics to explore the spiritual dimensions of the land, envisioning the rainforest as a divine, feminine force.

In Guyana, the Amazonian interior is often referred to as “the bush”—a complicated term that evokes both reverence and danger. Persaud reflects these contradictions in *Rainforest 6: ‘the edge of seasons’* (taken from the poetry of Lucille Clifton) (2013), where lush greenery flourishes beneath a twilight sky rendered in deep violets and blues. A vivid red sun that can also be read as a blood moon anchors the composition, evoking apocalyptic scripture: “the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood.” Within this celestial body, a faint, haunting skeleton emerges in an invocation of Kali, the Hindu goddess of time, often depicted with skeletal features and associated with the destruction of illusion. The painting unfolds in the spirit of magical realism, where myth and landscape coexist. The rainforest becomes a cosmological space in which life and death, creation and decay, are eternally entangled.

Today Persaud’s vision resonates with renewed urgency, as Guyana faces mounting environmental vandalism from rapid industrial expansion—particularly oil extraction and illegal gold mining—that have endangered biodiversity and the health of Indigenous communities.

(GRACE ANEIZA ALI)





*Rainforest 6: 'the edge of seasons' (taken from the poetry of Lucille Clifton), from the series Rainforest, 2013. Acrylic on canvas, 56 × 36 inches (142.2 × 91.4 cm). Courtesy of the artist*

# JAVIER PUUNAWE

Javier Puunawe (b. 1981, Alto Orinoco, Venezuela) is an Indigenous Yanomami from the Koshekapuei community. His family is from Hapokashita, a village on the banks of the Orinoco River whose name derives from a type of clay (*hapoka shii*) used as raw material for pottery.

Puunawe honors the tradition and knowledge of his ancestors while drawing as well on the memories of his immediate family. He has single-mindedly embarked on an autodidactic utopian endeavor to revive the sole surviving traditional form of Yanomami ceramics: the *hapoka*, or clay pot, which fell into disuse after the introduction of metal pots and pans. Puunawe's vessels are not made to be used; they are bold and original statements of the form of the traditional Yanomami *hapoka*, highlighting its volume and the designs applied to its red fired-clay surface. His unmistakable work marries a free style with a strong sense of heritage steeped in Yanomami culture.

His works have been featured in the collective exhibition *Hashimi. A treinta años de la masacre* (Hashimi. The massacre thirty years on) (ABRA, Caracas, 2023) and the solo show *Hapoka* (Sala TAC, Caracas, 2023). (LUIS ROMERO)





*Hapoka oni eyekewe prihiriwe*, 2021. Baked clay,  $8\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{7}{8} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$  inches ( $21 \times 20 \times 20$  cm) [top]; *Hapoka oni eyekewe ithothowe*, 2021. Baked clay,  $8\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{3}{4}$  inches ( $22 \times 22 \times 22$  cm) [bottom]; Courtesy of the artist

## ABEL RODRÍGUEZ (MOGAJE GUIHU)

Abel Rodríguez (Mogaje Guihu) (b. 1941, La Chorrera, Colombia; d. 2025, Bogotá, Colombia), a knowledge keeper of the Nonuya people, was also perhaps the finest visual interpreter of the Colombian Amazon's living memory. Transformed into a sensitive cartography, his wisdom—unintentionally, but with infinite patience and aesthetic precision—translated the ancestral knowledge of the Amazon into a deeply moving visual language accessible to the wider contemporary world. Unlike the Western scientific gaze, which dissects, classifies, and isolates, Rodríguez's perception is guided by interconnection. Each plant, river, *maloka* (longhouse), or animal in his drawings appears in relation to the others, weaving a web of life that heaves with spiritual unity.

"Don Abel," as he was affectionately known, arrived in Bogotá in the early 1990s, having been displaced by violence in his native territory. There, he began to produce drawings that revealed his vast ancestral knowledge of the forest. One of his most emblematic works, *El árbol de la vida y la abundancia* (The tree of life and abundance) (2023), conjures Amazonian myths and worldviews that tell of the interconnectedness of earth and sky. The painting's symbolic power lies in its capacity to be appreciated as a living being whose branching paths tap vast oral, botanical, and spiritual reserves of forest knowledge. Rodríguez's legacy is a call to contemporary art to renew itself—to stop looking at nature as an object and to start viewing it as a sacred subject. (MARÍA WILLS)



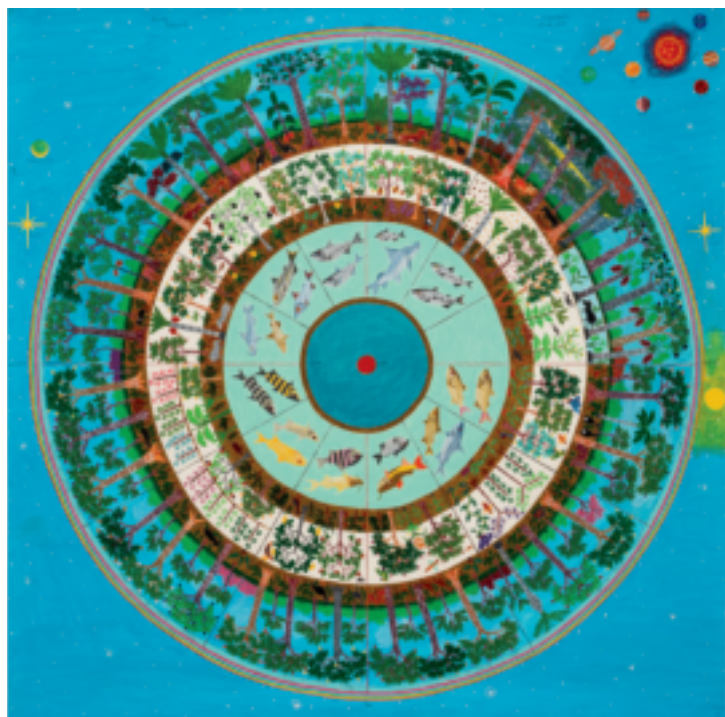
*El árbol de la vida y la abundancia* (The tree of life and abundance), 2023. Ink on paper, 55¼ × 54⅞ inches (140.5 × 139.5 cm). Courtesy of Jane Hait and Justin Beal

## AYCOOBO (WILSON RODRÍGUEZ)

Aycoobo (Wilson Rodríguez) (b. 1967, La Chorrera, Colombia) is the heir of an artistic tradition and body of ancestral wisdom gleaned from his father, Abel Rodríguez, a renowned artist and keeper of traditional wisdom of the Nonuya people. This passing on of knowledge did not take place in a conventional academic setting but through oral and experiential teaching deeply grounded in the Amazonian worldview. From an early age, Aycoobo accompanied his father on walks through the forest, learning the plants, ecological cycles, and mythical accounts central to an alternative universe that increasingly permeates Western consciousness.

What began as a learning process evolved into a body of work with a distinct language of its own. Aycoobo's paintings are enriched with visionary components revealed to him through the ingestion of sacred plants. His works are rich in vibrant colors and are shaped by intuition and imagination that transcends the tangible world. For Aycoobo, ayahuasca is a pathway to the inner self, a portal to invisible dimensions.

*Calendario* (Calendar) (2025) challenges the concept of linear time and proposes an Amazonian worldview of interspecies relationships and cultivation of the *chagra*—the Nonuya community's living garden. Instead of dates and numbers, Aycoobo charts cycles of growth and flowering, rain, birdsong, and fish reproduction to reveal a circular, living temporality. (MARÍA WILLS)



*Calendario* (Calendar), 2025. Acrylic on paper, 55  $\frac{1}{8}$   $\times$  55  $\frac{1}{8}$  inches (140  $\times$  140 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Instituto de Visión







*La maloka de las plantas* (The plant *maloka*), 2024. Acrylic on paper, 27¼ × 39⅜ inches (70 × 100 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Instituto de Visión

## NELLY SHEIMI

Nelly Sheimi (b. 1970, Alto Orinoco, Venezuela) is a Yanomami artist and artisan from the Mahekototeri community. Drawing on her knowledge of basketry and the influence of her son-in-law Sheroanawe Hakihiwe, she has developed a body of work that seeks to reclaim the traditional designs of basketry and body painting while introducing innovations in composition and color.

It is a Yanomami tradition to use the body as a canvas in day-to-day life and in festivities and ceremonies, in which participants paint themselves with *onoto* (*achiote* or annatto) and charcoal. Since 2022, Nelly has been translating this ancestral practice to paper. She draws freely, filling the surface as if it were a body or basket; what may seem to us as abstractions are recognizable tropes to anyone in the Yanomami community. Sheimi uses acrylic on recycled cane-fiber paper. Among her motifs are the *kra* (caterpillar), the *kirithami mamiki* (bird's foot), *wii* and *shote* basket designs, and *warora peno mayo* (snail trails). These drawings are more an attempt to describe objects and the natural world than to convey any symbolic meaning.

Sheimi's works featured in the collective exhibition *Hashimi. A treinta años de la masacre* (Hashimi. The massacre thirty years on) (ABRA, Caracas, 2023). (LUIS ROMERO).





*Kirithami mamiki* (Bird's foot), 2023. Acrylic on recycled sugarcane paper,  $13\frac{3}{4} \times 9\frac{3}{4}$  inches ( $35 \times 25$  cm). Courtesy of ABRA, Caracas



*Warora peno mayo* (Snail's path), 2023. Acrylic on recycled sugarcane paper,  $13\frac{3}{4} \times 9\frac{3}{4}$  inches ( $35 \times 25$  cm). Courtesy of ABRA, Caracas



*Oni kraya* (Caterpillar drawing), 2023. Acrylic on recycled sugarcane paper,  $13\frac{3}{4} \times 9\frac{3}{4}$  inches ( $35 \times 25$  cm). Courtesy of ABRA, Caracas







*Wii a oni* (Wii basket drawing), 2023. Acrylic on recycled sugarcane paper,  $13\frac{3}{4} \times 9\frac{3}{4}$  inches ( $35 \times 25$  cm). Courtesy of ABRA, Caracas





*Oni shoto* (Shote basket drawing), 2023. Acrylic on recycled sugarcane paper,  $13\frac{3}{4} \times 9\frac{3}{4}$  inches ( $35 \times 25$  cm). Courtesy of ABRA, Caracas

T2i (b. 1991, Cayenne, French Guiana) is a rapper, graphic designer, and music video director who lives and works in Roura, in eastern French Guiana. In 2022 he and the artist NouN created *Manman Dilo*, a multidisciplinary exhibition shown in French Guiana, Paris, and several cities in Brazil. The artists' starting point was the place name "Guiana," which according to Indigenous tradition means "Land of abundant water" in the Arawak and Wayana languages. Together they created a collective imaginary and iconography to be presented in a public space that centered on a mythical creature from French Guiana: Manman Dilo, "Mother of Waters" or Mami Wata, half woman and half fish, a figure both feared and admired. With *Manman Dilo* the artists offer a group of works that investigate this figure as a privileged guarantor of history and the ancestral oralities of African descent, as well as a strong feminine power. T2i's work reflects his strong connection to his native Creole culture. He often addresses themes related to identity, daily life, and social issues in French Guiana.

The short film *Manman Dilo* (2022), both directed and scored by T2i, remains partly faithful to the popular stories that surround this character in French Guiana. In this film, T2i depicts Manman Dilo, who lives in rivers and the oceans, as a strong, healing, and feminine force. He skillfully plays with well-known images that are laden with religious symbolism and reaffirms the central place of Black women at the heart of a belief system often dominated by white and patriarchal points of reference. (NouN and T2i)





*Manman Dilo*, 2022. Film, 5 min., 4:3/HD. Courtesy of the artist

# AGUSTINA VALERA AND OLIVER AGUSTÍN

Agustina Valera (b. 1962, San Francisco, Peru) and Oliver Agustín (b. 1983, Pucallpa, Peru) are distinguished ceramic artists of the Shipibo-Konibo people, originally from the San Francisco de Yarínacocha community in Ucayali. Valera learned the craft as a child from the women in her family and has developed the ceramic tradition by incorporating new themes and reviving ancestral techniques. Her son Agustín is a pioneer among Shipibo ceramists, having decided to follow the call of the clay in an art form traditionally practiced by women.

The work of both artists is notable for its complexity, monumentality, and technical rigor. One of their recurring themes is that of *chomos voladores* (Flying vessels) (2018–2019), representations that combine the form of traditional earthenware jars called *tinajas*—once used as funerary urns and later as containers for *masato*, an alcoholic beverage employed in rituals and festivals—with the unidentified aerial phenomena (UAPs) of urban legends in the contemporary Amazon, especially Pucallpa. This series depicts physical and spiritual journeys to other worlds, alluding to the journey of Ronin, the great serpent and creator of rivers, who arrived in Amazonia after crossing the cosmos. (CHRISTIAN BENDAYÁN)



*Chomos voladores* (Flying vessels), 2018–2019. Ceramic,  $27\frac{5}{8} \times 25\frac{1}{4} \times 25\frac{1}{4}$  inches (70 × 64 × 64 cm),  $32\frac{1}{4} \times 23\frac{5}{8} \times 23\frac{5}{8}$  inches (82 × 60 × 60 cm),  $43\frac{1}{4} \times 39\frac{3}{8} \times 39\frac{3}{8}$  inches (110 × 100 × 100 cm). Hochschild Correa Collection





## GÊ VIANA

Gê Viana (b. 1986, Santa Luzia, Brazil) directs her artistic practice toward the intersection of official archival documents and the resistance of memory and oral history within her community. With Afro-diasporic and Indigenous roots—the Anapuru Muypurá people—she focuses on deconstructing colonialism, particularly by investigating the festivities and medicinal properties of Afro-diasporic and Indigenous food from Maranhão. In this sense, the Afro-diasporic and Indigenous everyday life of the Maranhão territory lies at the core of her work, alongside a direct confrontation with colonial culture and its systems of art and communication.

In the series *Couro laminado* (Laminated skin) (2022–ongoing), the artist combines manual collage, photomontage, and painting on raffia. These works displace and recontextualize images within new, emancipatory frameworks to challenge hegemonic historical narratives and an ongoing colonial program that endangers the entire existence of certain groups, such as Afro-diasporic and Indigenous communities. This series references significant social uprisings—moments of collective gathering, whether in festive communion or in the shared struggle for rights and freedom. Viana's work emphasizes how, in her ancestry, celebration and resistance go hand in hand. (MATEUS NUNES)



*Histórias do Anu III* (Histories of Anu III), from the series *Couro laminado* (Laminated skin), 2024–2025. Mixed media on raffia canvas, 51  $\frac{5}{8}$   $\times$  44  $\frac{1}{8}$  inches (131  $\times$  112 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Lima Galeria

# SANTIAGO YAHUARCANI

Santiago Yahuarcani (b. 1960, Pebas, Peru) is a visual artist and family leader of the White Heron clan in Peru. He identifies as part of the Uitoto-Aimen+ people, and his work reflects the memory of atrocities committed by the rubber extraction industry as well as the power of unseen beings in light of the issues the Amazonian region faces today. He lives in the Pebas community, on the banks of the Amazon, where he was born. There, as a young man, he experimented with painting on *llanchama*—a plant fiber used as a canvas by the Bora and Uitoto peoples. In recent years, Yahuarcani's work has captured the memory of his people as passed on by his mother, Martha López, who experienced forced migration from the Putumayo River during the rubber boom. In *Amazonía II* (2022), the landscape takes on human form; the milk flowing from the rubber tree is also the blood of a mother bleeding to death. The title "Amazonia" speaks to the pain of this entire region, a history of suffering shared by all Indigenous peoples of the Pan-Amazonian countries. (CHRISTIAN BENDAYÁN)







## CURATOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Grace Aneiza Ali** is a Guyanese-born curator-scholar of contemporary art of the Global South, whose work explores the intersections of art and migration. She is also an assistant professor in the Department of Art History at Florida State University and is the 2024–25 Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellow at The Huntington. Her book, *Liminal Spaces: Migration and Women of the Guyanese Diaspora*, explores the art and migration narratives of women of Guyanese heritage. Ali serves as the editor-in-chief of the College Art Association's *Art Journal Open* and is a member of the board of advisors for *British Art Studies*.

**Christian Bendayán** is a self-taught artist whose work has strengthened Amazonian values and aesthetics in Peruvian culture. In 2019 he represented Peru at the 58th Venice Biennale and he has participated in major biennials across Latin America. His art reinterprets the Amazonian landscape, denounces violence against Indigenous and trans communities, and critiques environmental destruction and transculturation. A key promoter of Amazonian art, he has curated over fifty projects highlighting Indigenous, popular, and riverine artists. The former director of the National Institute of Culture of Loreto, he received the National Culture Prize and founded BufeAmazon+Art to reclaim the river as a space for creativity.

**Keyna Eleison** is a curator, writer, researcher, griot heiress and shaman, narrator, singer, ancestral chronicler, and cultural manager. She holds an M.A. degree in art history and a specialist degree in history and architecture from the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio) and a B.A. degree in philosophy from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). She is a member of the African Heritage Commission for the lauration of the Cais do Valongo region as a World Heritage Site (UNESCO). She served as manager of all the cultural centers in the Municipality of Rio de Janeiro between 2015 and 2017 and pedagogical coordinator of the Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage between 2018 and 2019. She was the curator of the 10th SIART International Biennial in Bolivia and the artistic director of the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio) between 2020 and 2023, as well as the curator of the 1st Amazon Biennial in 2023. She is currently a columnist for *Contemporary And*, the director of research and content for the Amazon Biennial, and an at-large cocurator of the 36th São Paulo Biennial. She works in the development of exhibitions and the meanings of works of art and artists, as well as guiding artistic processes, curating exhibitions, teaching art, and coordinating art education and narrative to pass on and capture oral knowledge.

**Elvira Espejo Ayca** is a prominent Indigenous artist, cultural administrator, and researcher. Born in the Qaqachaka *ayllu* (Eduardo Abaroa Province, Oruro, Bolivia), her practice is linked to textiles, oral tradition, and poetry. With countless publications to her name, she is the director of the National Museum of Ethnography and Folklore (MUSEF) in La Paz. She received the 2020 Goethe Medal, an official award of the Federal Republic of Germany, for her work and commitment to cultural exchange. The importance of her work lies in the dialogue between the practice and knowledge of Indigenous communities and their intersection with academia, cultural management, and museums.

**Diana Iturralde** is the 2024–26 Cisneros Institute Research Fellow and a Ph.D. candidate in art history at Rutgers University. She specializes in modern and contemporary art from Latin America, and her dissertation work examines visual representations of cultural and environmental transformations in the Andean–Amazon region from the nineteenth century to the present. Diana is affiliated with the Andean–Amazonian Studies Working Group and the Environmental Humanities and Environmental Justice Working Group at Rutgers University. She has participated in the Center for Curatorial Leadership seminar and the Getty Foundation's The Amazon Basin as Connecting Borderland seminar from 2023 to 2025.

**Miguel Keerveld** is an independent curator, artist, and certified coach from Suriname. In collaboration with Readytex Art Gallery in Paramaribo, Suriname, his work intersects with curation, artistic research, art-producing, and writing. He is formally educated in civil engineering and subsequently undertook a social worker's program with specialization in coaching and counseling. For over a decade Miguel has been curating exhibitions, coordinating in- and outdoor events, and providing risk-based assessments for business processes as a certified ISO 9001 lead auditor in the position of director and founder of DEAM Advisory LLC.

**NouN** is a visual artist who lives and works between French Guiana and Paris, exploring several disciplines including painting, drawing, and photography. She was trained as an artist in Paris, where she also had her first solo exhibition, *Dans les yeux*, in 2019. In 2020 she joined the Art and Image Department of the École Kourtrajmé, run by the artist JR. She has participated in several group exhibitions in Paris, notably at the Centquatre-Paris and the Galleria Continua. In 2022, she and artist T2i created *Manman Dilo*, a multidisciplinary exhibition shown in French Guiana, Paris, and several cities in Brazil. Today, NouN continues to work on questions of body representation, the decolonized female gaze, and multiple identities.

**Mateus Nunes** is a curator, art critic, and researcher from the Brazilian Amazon, currently based in São Paulo. Nunes is an assistant curator at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP). He holds a Ph.D. in the history of art from the University of Lisbon, Portugal, and has completed postdoctoral fellowships in Amazonian studies at the Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador and in the history of art and architecture at Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil. His writings are frequently published in *Artforum*, *ArtReview*, *Flash Art*, *Frieze*, *Mousse*, and various specialized academic journals.

**Luis Romero** is a visual artist, cultural administrator, curator, and independent editor. Since 2016, he has been the codirector of ABRA in Caracas. From 1999 to 2010, he was the editor of *Pulgar*, where he also occasionally published work. From 2005 to 2015, he was the founder and director of Oficina #1, an independent contemporary art space in Caracas. From 2013 to 2016, he was a member of the board of directors of TAGA (Taller de Artistas Gráficos Asociados) in Caracas. In 2007, he participated in documenta 12 in Kassel, Germany. From 2000 to 2004, he was the director of the artist residency program Fundación La Llama in Caracas. He has received the following awards: AICA Prize, Difusión del Arte Venezolano, for the research project ArchivoAbierto, Caracas (2013); Orientation Trip Grant, Prince Claus Fund, Amsterdam (2010); CIFO Grants & Commissions Program Award, Miami (2008); UNESCO–Aschberg Bursary for Artists Residency at the Rijksakademie, Amsterdam (1995).

T2i is a rapper, graphic designer, and music video director who lives and works in Roura, French Guiana and graduated from the Campus Fonderie de l'Image outside Paris. His musical universe is filled with ebullient and minimalist hip-hop sounds, and, with training in graphic design and videography, the image is his testing ground. From visuals to music, everything is made by him to render a singular creative universe. In 2022, he and the artist NouN created *Manman Dilo*, a multidisciplinary exhibition shown in French Guiana, Paris, and several cities in Brazil. T2i has a strong connection to his native Creole culture, which is reflected in his work. He often addresses themes related to identity, daily life, and social issues in French Guiana.

**María Wills** is an independent curator whose main projects reexamine official historical narratives in art. Her cocurated exhibitions *Sembrar la duda: Indicios sobre las representaciones indígenas en Colombia* and *Wametisé: ideas para un amazofuturismo* highlighted the need for Indigenous communities to have their own governance in order to be the narrators of their own creations. Previously, for the 2019 MOMENTA Biennale de l'image, titled *The Life of Things*, she presented a critique of the categories that define cultural objects as exotic or "non-Western," as well as other aspects of the crisis of creativity in our consumer society. She was the director of the Museo de Arte del Banco de la República from 2020 to 2024, where she promoted diverse projects that problematize and redefine the role of art museums in a country like Colombia.

## CREDITS

- pp. 37, 45, 79, 81: Photos: Gilbert Jacott. Courtesy of Readytex Art Gallery
- p. 39: Photo: Courtesy of the artist
- pp. 41, 125–127: Photos: Christian Bendayán
- p. 43: Photo: T2i
- pp. 49, 50–51: Photos: Courtesy of the artist
- p. 53: Photo: Joseph Lara
- pp. 55–59: Photos: Courtesy of the collective
- pp. 61–63, 95–97, 100–103: Photos: Juan Manuel Rada
- pp. 65–66: Photos: Universidad San Francisco de Quito, anthropology collection
- p. 67: Photo: Courtesy of the artist
- p. 69: Photo: Courtesy of the artist
- pp. 73–75, 77, 107, 115–121: Photos: Eloísa Arias Peña
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- p. 105: Photo: Courtesy of the artist
- p. 109: Photo: Ana Balaguera
- pp. 111–113: Photos: Juan Pablo Velasco
- p. 123: Photos: Courtesy of the artist
- p. 129: Photo: João Henrique Lima
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost we would like to thank the artists in the exhibition, without whom this show would not be possible. We are also grateful to the incredible team of curators who accepted the challenge of collaborating on this project to share a more diverse view of Amazonia. Thank you to Keyna Eleison who provided the theoretical background of our conversations and helped conceive of the project. We also want to thank: Omayra Alvarado-Jensen, María Paula Bastidas, María Berbara, Philippe Bon, Carmo Johnson Projects, Simon Castets, Carmen María Fernández-Salvador Ayala, The Huni Kuin Artists Movement (MAHKU), Tie Jojima, Beatriz Lopez, Courtney J. Martin, Suchitra Mattai, Daniela Moscoso, Gabriela Moyano, Isabela Muci Barradas, Matteo Norzi, Monique NouhChaia SookdewSing, Luis Pérez-Oramas, Horacio Ramos Cerna, Bruno Reis, and Patricia Zalamea Fajardo. A special thanks to Clarice Oliveira Tavares.

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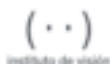
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## *Amazonia Açú*

Curatorial Advisor: Keyna Eleison

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Americas Society  
680 Park Avenue  
New York, NY 10065  
artatamericassociety.org

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